

## **School IPM Outreach and Research Activities, NYS IPM Program, 2009**

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**Abstract:** Integrated pest management in schools is needed to reduce risks to children and others from both pests and the overuse of pesticides. The NYS IPM Program was involved in several outreach activities at schools in 2009. We organized and conducted on-site assessments of the pest management programs of several NYS school districts, three that have received the IPM Institute's STAR certification. We also did on-site consultations for specific pest management situations at two Long Island districts and the New York City Board of Education. We participated in a nation-wide group preparing a USDA-funded Pest Management Strategic Plan for school IPM and were involved in plans to implement the Plan's recommendations including organizing the Northeast School IPM Working Group. In 2009, NYS IPM Program staff organized a meeting of the Statewide School IPM Committee and assisted the US EPA in school IPM outreach in Oneida County. We also began planning a repeat of the statewide survey of school pest management policies and practices.

**Background and Justification:** Pest management in schools has received increased attention in New York State and nation-wide. This is due to the critical need to decrease pesticide use to protect our children, who, by nature of their size and developmental stage, are at greater risk than adults. Yet, at the same time, we cannot compromise the quality of pest control because pests represent an equally important health hazard. Schools are especially challenging to manage because they include such varied settings as classrooms, cafeterias, laboratories, auditoriums, theaters, playing fields, playgrounds, and gardens. These areas are heavily used for a variety of purposes, including after-hours public meetings. Visitors, staff, and students are frequently in direct contact with the lawns, athletic fields, flowers, trees, playgrounds, and buildings on the school grounds. Recent passage of a New York State (NYS) pesticide notification law has resulted in additional pressure on schools to reduce pesticide use.

**On-site School Assessments:** Together with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell's Entomology Department, and Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) districts, NYS IPM Program staff worked with school districts school to upgrade pest management. Intensive team-based on-site assessments have been conducted over the past three years of the pest management program of four school districts. Three of these districts (Seafood, Ithaca, and North Syracuse) were awarded the IPM Institute's STAR School IPM certification. These districts joined a select group (around 35 nationwide, 6 in New York State) of schools and daycares that have been recognized for achieving this high-level of IPM implementation. Five other school districts have indicated their desire to have similar team-based on-site assessments in the near future.

NYS IPM staff consulted with two schools on Long Island in 2009. In the Babylon School District ants were plaguing the Elementary School. Pavement ants were appearing in the principal's office, a classroom, and another office while carpenter ants had made a home in a cafeteria windowsill. We made IPM recommendations, which included baiting and replacement of the wood windowsill. In Comsewogue School District (Port Jefferson Station) cockroaches have been a perennial problem. IPM staff made a site visit to several locations, providing IPM recommendations that included sanitation, clutter reduction, and baiting.

**School IPM Pest Management Strategic Plan:** In 2006, NYS IPM Program staff participated in a by-invitation-only meeting to develop a national Pest Management Strategic Plan (PMSP) for school IPM. This USDA-funded effort drew on school and pest management expertise from across the nation and will serve as a guiding framework for the implementation of IPM in all of the nation's schools by 2015. Work continued on the PMSP via monthly conference calls and individual assignments until the document was released in January, 2009.

To facilitate the implementation of the PMSP's goals, a national school IPM working group and affiliated regional working groups were organized. A NYS IPM Program staff member is an active member of the national group and co-chair of the regional working group in the northeastern United States. The northeastern group initiated IPM demonstrations at a school district in each of two states, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, where school IPM programs are lacking. In 2010, these demonstration projects will continue, and new demonstrations will be initiated in two additional states. In 2009 and continuing in 2010, the northeast group also supported a coalition of school staff to share information, training, and resources to establish and support IPM programs throughout Pennsylvania. In 2010, they will facilitate the development of similar coalitions in other states where school IPM programs have already been established. Other activities of the northeast group in 2009 and continuing through 2010 are:

- 1) Identify and build upon collaborations within the NE that promote school and child care IPM.
- 2) Strengthen the capacity of the NESIWG to accomplish its mission and goals
- 3) Identify needs, opportunities, and priorities for research, extension, education, and implementation for school IPM in the Northeast.

**Other Outreach:** As part of the Bed Bug Advisory Board, IPM staff met with the New York City Department of Education's Pest Control Director to discuss the frequent sighting of bed bugs in classrooms and offices, and ways to handle the insects as well as communicating with the parents and staff about bed bugs at home.

The NYS IPM Program organized a Statewide School IPM Committee in 2002. In October 2009, we held an eighth meeting of the committee. In addition to the diverse membership updating each other on their school IPM activities, special presentations were given by Laura Broccolo of Broccolo Lawn and Tree Care on the specialized services that her organization provides for schools and Veronika Carella on Maryland PTA's involvement with school IPM. We also discussed implications for NYS of school IPM regional and national activities.

A NYS IPM staff member was contacted by the US EPA about their desire to visit schools in Oneida County with an IPM outreach push. This is part of a children's health initiative by the EPA, and Oneida Co. was chosen as a target area within Region 2. We put them in contact with one of the local BOCES who arranged a presentation at a chapter meeting of the NYS Superintendents of School Buildings & Grounds Association

on May 20. On May 21, IPM staff accompanied EPA personnel in visiting three Oneida County school districts to share resources with those districts and discuss how to assist them in their pest management programs.

In 2001 and partnering with the NYS Health Department and the NYS Department of Education, the NYS IPM Program surveyed all of the state's public school districts and BOCES districts concerning their pest management policies and practices. The results have been helpful in guiding school IPM outreach activities. In 2009, we began planning a repeat of the survey in order to update this important database.

In 2007, NYS IPM Program staff worked with northern New York Cornell Cooperative Extension and Board of Cooperative Education Services partners to organize school IPM outreach workshops for rural Adirondack school districts, an underserved audience. In 2009, an article on this project was submitted to the newsletter of the NYS Rural Schools Association for use in their fall issue.